



WHAT IS POSTTRAUMATIC STRESS REACTION?

Posttraumatic stress reaction is a normal response to a distressing event that is outside the range of usual human experience. Disasters are dramatic and intense experiences — major interruptions in the natural flow of life.

The emotional effects of these events may show up immediately or they may appear weeks, even months later.

Trauma And The Sense Of Loss

People traumatized by events or disasters often experience a pervasive sense of loss:

- ◆ loss of feeling safe
- ◆ loss of identity/future
- ◆ loss of feeling of control over one's life
- ◆ loss of trust in others
- ◆ loss of hope
- ◆ loss of personal power
- ◆ loss of friends
- ◆ loss of home/belongings

This sense of loss may be present in physical symptoms

- ◆ headaches
- ◆ aches & pains
- ◆ overeating or loss of appetite
- ◆ bowel problems
- ◆ skin disorders
- ◆ sleep disorders
(*nightmares or excessive sleeping*)
- ◆ sleep disturbance
- ◆ vomiting
- ◆ short term memory loss or emotional/behavioral reactions
- ◆ loss of interest in activities
- ◆ decreased performance levels
- ◆ irritability or confusion
- ◆ increased difficulty in relating to others
- ◆ sadness or depression

These reactions are understandable and usually pass quickly. Fear is a normal reaction to danger.

Dealing With Distress

- ◆ Talk openly about feelings of fear, anxiety and irritability.
- ◆ Pay attention to a healthy diet.
- ◆ Engage in physical activity.
- ◆ Make time for relaxation.
- ◆ Encourage contact with friends.
- ◆ Rehearse safety measures to be taken in future disasters.

When Problems Persist

Talk with a counselor or family therapist. With professional assistance, "adjustment reactions" can be dealt with relatively quickly and easily.

People who have had previous experiences with civil unrest — such as refugees and war veterans — may experience more severe reactions, including flashbacks.

Call Project REBOUND's crisis hotline, 1 (800) 854-7771, for information or referral. Trained, multi-lingual operators can provide assistance free of charge.

Accessing Special Services

Individuals who are hearing impaired may call the following information and referral numbers for referral to mental health counselors working with the deaf and hard of hearing:

TDD/TTY: 213/487-9613
Voice: 213/738-4961.

Or,

Greater Los Angeles Council
on Deafness, Inc. (GLAD)
Voice/TDD: 213/383-2220

Project REBOUND

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